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REASONS FOR CONTINUED CHINESE EXCLUSION.

BY GEORGE C. PERKINS, UNITED STATES SENATOR FROM CALIFORNIA.

THE question of the unrestricted admission into the United States of undesirable immigrants is becoming more pressing from year to year, and is more and more attracting public attention. Not many years ago, the Chinese problem was the only one which demanded solution, and the people of the Eastern States had scant sympathy with the inhabitants of California, Oregon and Washington who demanded that immigration from China should cease. But, as time has given better opportunities for learning what the Chinese are who come here as contract-laborers, and what effect their presence in large numbers would have in this country, the greater is the proportion of Americans who believe in restrictive measures and the more rigorous they believe those restrictions should be. And it is fast becoming evident that it is not the Chinese peons alone that should be prevented from overrunning our country at their own sweet will. There are other Asiatic nations whose people would be as great a menace to Americans and their institutions as are the subjects of the great Empress who rules the four hundred million inhabitants of China from the secluded imperial palace in Peking. It cannot be denied that from some parts of Europe it is possible to receive a class of immigrants that are little more desirable than those from Asiatic countries, though there is not between them and us that vast abyss which separates us from the Oriental. The latter we have been able through sad experience to study very closely and to ascertain what his presence among us means. Of necessity the Chinese, because of the large colony which has grown up in California, have been the principal objects of this study; but it has

also been learned that what has been found true of them is true in all essential particulars of all the other peoples of the Orient.

The opposition to the Chinese is not an unthinking, unreasoning prejudice. In the early days of the Pacific Coast they were gladly welcomed. There was work for them to do in building railroads, in reclaiming waste-lands, in caring for and harvesting crops; and, even now, it would be a boon to all agriculturists and horticulturists of California if Chinese laborers could be freely admitted without danger to interests far greater than the successful management of a ranch. Yet our experience has created an intelligent public opinion which is unalterably opposed to the immigration of Chinese peon labor. The reasons are not far to seek. They are fundamental—racial—and are bound to make themselves felt in spite of theories as to moral obligations or the assumed needs of foreign trade. They bring to the front again that pitiless truth of the survival of the fittest. In the question of life or death which is involved, the moral theories of the pro-Chinese advocates can scarcely have that weight which would be theirs were the future of our institutions and our race on this continent in no danger. When two races so radically different as Chinese and Americans freely intermingle in large numbers, there must be assimilation or the subjection of one to the other.

The experience of the United States for fifty years, and of other countries for far longer periods, proves conclusively that the Chinese are not assimilative. Witness the Chinese colonies in San Francisco, Hongkong, Manila, Singapore, Penang and Malacca. Their racial tendency is more strongly opposed to amalgamation with other races than that of the Hindoo or the Parsee. Far into future history they will be what they now are, and they will remain aloof from all other peoples. If they are not assimilative, they can be only a foreign body within our borders, and must either suppress or be suppressed.

In the contest for survival between the American and the Chinese, the latter has an overpowering advantage. Centuries before there was an Anglo-Saxon, the Chinese had gained their present characteristics. Thousands of years of exclusion of all other peoples had made them unassimilative. Their country, walled against the external world, which they regarded with contempt, became crowded to the limit of support, and universal poverty was the result. For thousands of years, the people of

China have been compelled to live on the scantiest of means; and the result is a race—the fittest only surviving—which is probably capable of sustaining more hardships, of living on cheaper food, of needing less clothing and shelter, of having fewer wants, and a lower estimate of life, as a whole, than any other civilized people. They are capable of entering into competition with any race on earth, with the chances in favor of their ultimate supremacy. To attempt to meet the Chinese on their own ground would mean decimation at once. No other civilized people could endure were it to adopt the Chinese standard, and that standard they would have to adopt were they to compete at all.

Such competitors with men and women of our own race do not come to us even as free agents. It is well known that they are in practical slavery, more harsh and exacting than that suffered by the victims of the *padrone* system who come to us from Southern Italy to earn as slaves, in the land of liberty, fortunes for harsh taskmasters here or abroad. This slavery is not an accident of Chinese communities in America. It is one of the institutions of China. There the practice of buying and selling men and women is nearly as common as the buying and selling cattle among us. It is a system recognized by Chinese law and has been in vogue for thousands of years. It is a feature of Chinese civilization which is more firmly rooted than the principle of industrial liberty is with us. This is the system which is imported into the United States with coolie labor and which would supplant free labor in field and workshop were the opportunity given. Coolie laborers are hired out in gangs by a “boss” who collects their wages, giving them a part and turning over to some Chinese “Company” the remainder; and they are compelled to endure this servitude because the members of their families in China are hostages for them, and are guarantees that they will return to China and will maintain their allegiance to the country of their birth. As an American Consul-General has pointed out, the horrible punishment that may lawfully be inflicted on these hostages is sufficient to account for the rarity of instances of naturalization which have occurred in the history of Chinese immigration to the United States. Even when a coolie dies here, his bones, under terms of the contract, are sent home for burial.

When men are held in slavery, it is not to be expected that women will be exempt, and they are not. In China they are law-

fully held as household slaves, as concubines or for immoral purposes. In fact, women are looked upon as legitimate objects of barter. The real wife, even, has only a semblance of freedom, and she is surrounded by actual slaves—girls bought for so much cash. But these wives, except in a few isolated instances, never accompany their husbands abroad. They are left at home as hostages, and it is to see them and to conform to the requirements of their religious belief that Chinamen make their periodical visits home. Such women as are found in the domestic establishments of Chinese in America are to be classified with those slaves recognized by Chinese law as concubines. The true family life of the Chinaman is not found here; but, if it were, the conditions would not be changed—they would simply be intensified. The American ideal of a home has never arisen in the Chinese mind, and there is no evidence that it ever will. The teachings and practices of thousands of years can be overcome only by other thousands of years of education along other lines. In order to embrace Christian civilization, the entire mental and moral make-up of the Oriental must be changed. He cannot be made an American in a day.

There is still another danger that unrestricted immigration from the Orient would bring upon us. This is particularly conspicuous in the case of the Chinese. If they were firmly entrenched here, there would be introduced a trades-union system compared with which the American system is child's play. China is a nation in which the guild principle is a necessary part of the industrial system. It exists also among the mercantile class, as well as among the members of the handicrafts. What it is capable of doing, and how silently and irresistibly it works, we have had good reason to learn from the boycott on American goods which it has made so effective.

In addition to the mercantile and handicraft guilds, there are the guilds which are formed by the people from the same town or province when living in other than the place of their birth. Such guilds follow the Chinaman everywhere; and, when a considerable number of Chinese from the same district are gathered together, there is founded a guild which binds them in a homogeneous whole for self-protection and aggressive action against those by whom they are surrounded, if such action can in any way promote their own interests. Consul Fowler says that, in dealing with such

guilds in China, "consuls and diplomats have a very grave matter on their hands." So would the United States Government also have a grave matter on its hands, were there permitted among us a large Chinese population, which would surely come were the bars of restriction lowered.

What has been said will give some idea of the character of the immigrants that we desire to exclude from our shores. It is easy to infer, from the facts given, something of the nature of the communities that would be formed were immigration unrestricted. Bringing with them slavery, concubinage, prostitution, the opium vice, the disease of leprosy, the offensive and defensive organization of clans and guilds, the lowest standard of living known, and a detestation of the people among whom they live and with whom they will not even leave their bones when dead, they form a community within a community, and there live the Chinese life.

They have their terrorists' societies, their laws and customs, enforced with the barbarity which characterizes such enforcement in China, and they yield only outward obedience to the law of the land. They make use of our courts, by means of false witnesses, to reach with punishment some offender against themselves, and by the same means they prevent justice from being done in cases in which they are a party. They are rigidly organized to evade all laws bearing hard upon them, and the organization is so perfect that evasion is not difficult. They herd together by thousands in small space, caring nothing for shelter beyond the four walls and roof, and creating a district of dirt and filth where once were cleanliness and beauty. Within the dark and smoky rookeries where they dwell, they open dens for the demoralization of the white youths who surround them. They neither build nor repair, beautify nor cleanse, and their quarter reverts to the conditions found in the densely crowded cities of China. In such a sink, is it to be wondered at that nothing American can have a place; that no idea born of our civilization can find a lodgment; that the most prominent result is crime?

Looking to the more material aspect of the case, it is found that practically none of the earnings of Chinese in this country are invested here. All the savings of these shrewd money-makers go eventually to China, and no benefit accrues to our own country from the capital amassed by Chinese merchants. In San Francisco, the official figures for 1899 showed that one-quarter of the

duties on imports were paid by Chinese merchants. This is evidence of the great volume of trade in the hands of these Orientals. But in spite of the vast sums made, one would have looked in vain for any evidences of public spirit among them. They built no stores, no houses; they expended no money in any of the hundreds of ways in which prosperous Americans are wont to make their presence felt to the benefit of the community in which they live. On the contrary, the quarters that they inhabited were the most dilapidated, dirty and uninviting in the whole city—so noxious that, since the great fire, an effort is being made to prevent the reestablishment in the heart of the town of a foreign settlement that was offensive to the eye, the ear, the nose, and often to the touch. The Chinese merchant, rich, educated and refined in accordance with Chinese ideals, lived within these quarters and there maintained his domestic establishment; and yet between the genuine Chinese merchant or scholar and the coolie there is a gulf which the latter can never cross. The educated and cultivated Chinamen in America are comparatively few in number, but when one of them is met he is recognized readily. He is a man keen and intelligent, and when he can escape from his habitual distrust of Americans he is most pleasant to meet. But this distrust is hard to overcome, because it results from the hereditary and ineradicable social and moral ideals and manner of thought by which he is differentiated from Americans and Europeans through centuries of teaching and practice. The educated Oriental is a superior man, and it is not against him that objection is raised, but against the coolie who finds in this country a field for competition so vast and so profitable that, without restrictions, it would be filled to overflowing with Asiatic labor, bringing with it standards of life and morals which can tend only to drag down the American workman from the high level he has attained.

Personal freedom, the home, education, Christian ideals, respect for law and order are found on one side, and on the other the traffic in human flesh, domestic life which renders a home impossible, a desire for only that knowledge which may be at once coined into dollars, a contempt for our religion as new, novel, and without substantial basis, and no idea of the meaning of law other than as a regulation to be evaded by cunning or by bribery. The attack of the coolie laborer is not alone on wages, but on the

very foundation of the American workman's prosperity and well-being. The contest is between two social systems utterly opposed to each other. Customs and ideas that are the growth of three or four thousand years, which have made the Chinese a people of the strongest vitality, of fewest wants, and least aspiration for improvement, will inevitably conquer, as they have always conquered, in a strife with a civilization of a high plane. A scale of wages like that given by Consul-General Jernigan at Shanghai—blacksmith, 13 cents a day; brass-worker, 16 cents; barber, 3 cents; bootmaker, 10 cents; bricklayer, 10 cents; cabinet-maker, 11 cents; tailor, 10 cents; cotton-mill machinist, 11 to 22 cents; and cotton-factory hands, 18 cents—shows the margin which the coolie laborer has in a competition with American labor. With such a margin and such a heredity as he has, there can be no doubt as to his ability to overwhelm the laborer of any nation having modern civilization.

The immigration from China presents the most serious question in regard to emigration from the Orient, for the reason that China contains from 400,000,000 to 450,000,000 people, the mass of whom are of the class that are so objectionable here. But there are other Asiatics against whom similar objections are urged, and who would form here colonies that would forever remain distinct. Among these are the Japanese and Koreans, the former 50,000,000 in number, and already forming too large a population for the limited area of the Empire. Chances to expand have for a long time been sought, and the domination of Korea by Japan is one of the results of the great pressure of population in the Japanese islands. To relieve this pressure, longing eyes were once cast towards Hawaii, and it is probable that in the near future the Philippines will be the object of desire. These two Asiatic nations, while differing from the Chinese in many important respects, are alike with them in their lack of assimilative power, and for similar reasons. The Japanese will be always a Japanese, and will never become an American. He will maintain here intact all the characteristics of the civilization which is a thousand or more years older than our own, and between these two forms of progress there are irreconcilable differences. The competition of such a people with our own artisans can have only one result—the lowering of the standard of life among our own people, who must relinquish some of the best results of Christian

progress in order to compete at all. But such objection, as in the case of the Chinese, applies solely to the immigrants who come here to enter fields of industrial labor which are now filled with a prosperous and progressive population of our own blood, animated by the high ideals of the Anglo-Saxon. One of those ideals is the home, which is unknown to the Oriental. On the home, as a unit, is built up the system under which we live. The family, the family life and all its interests, is the firm basis on which rests all that is best in our present stage of advancement. With it the Church and the free schools are inextricably blended; and whatever affects one affects the other two elements of our civilization. Sweep them all away, and we should revert to the semi-civilized condition of the Orientals who have not developed the ideas which are embodied in the home, the Church and the schools. Admit among us a large population lacking those ideas and incapable of developing them, and there would be introduced a powerful force constantly opposing advancement along Christian lines and tending to drag down society to the Asiatic level.

Although from some parts of Europe and Asia Minor there come to us many immigrants who, like the bulk of the Chinese, are peons, there cannot be urged against them the same objection that is brought against the Chinese coolie. Natives of Southern Italy, Syria and Greece come here under the *padrone* system, some of them receiving only \$100 per year for the work they do, their earnings going to their masters. But these, perhaps the most objectionable of the immigrants from the other side of the Atlantic, are of our own civilization, and if given a chance eventually fit into our system without difficulty. In any event, the second generation, educated in our public schools, becomes American in the best sense of the term. What becomes of the average immigrant from Ireland, England, Germany, France, Sweden, Norway, Austria and Italy is readily ascertained by a glance at any community which has received such accessions. One will find them in all walks of life, industrial and professional, and their children among the most ardent of young Americans.

Mr. Z. F. McSweeney, formerly Assistant Commissioner of Immigration, in an article published not long ago, reviewed the course of immigration past and present, pointing out its characteristics, its advantages and the dangers which threaten from the unrestricted admission of people of criminal instincts, the men-

tally unsound, and those who are unable to make a living by honest means. He says:

"When we consider this question it compels us to pause in wonder as to what its effect will be on the future of the American people. If, in spite of our institutions and forms of government, the alien races that have already come and are still coming can succeed in undermining our religious, political, and economic foundations, it will be because we willingly succumb, through inertia, to their influences. Rome, Babylon, and all the nations of the world that have fallen have done so because they abandoned their moral, religious, and social ideals, their decline in most cases being contemporaneous with the introduction of alien races. If such is to be the result in this country, it will simply be history repeating itself; but I have confidence enough in the morals and character of the American people to believe that the races introduced among us will take from us only that which is good, and through education we will give them stability and the power to become thoroughly assimilated."

I, too, have confidence that the morals and character of the American people will leaven the mass of our population, if we take care to exclude the inert elements of inbred criminality, degeneracy and Orientalism.

GEORGE C. PERKINS.